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ABSTRACT

This report presents six core principles of inclusive assessment and accountability systems with a brief rationale and specific characteristics that reflect each principle. The principles are: (1) All students with disabilities are included in the assessment system; (2) Decisions about how students with disabilities participate in the assessment system are the result of clearly articulated participation, accommodations, and alternate assessment decision-making processes; (3) All students with disabilities are included when student scores are publicly reported in the same frequency and format as all other students, whether they participate with or without accommodations, or in an alternate assessment; (4) The assessment performance of students with disabilities has the same impact on the final accountability index as the performance of other students, regardless of how the students participate in the assessment system; (5) There is improvement of both the assessment system and the accountability system over time, through the processes of formal monitoring, ongoing evaluation, and systematic training in the context of emerging research and best practice; and (6) Every policy and practice reflects the belief that all students must be included in state and district assessment and accountability systems. (Contains 11 references.) (CR)

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Principles and Characteristics of Inclusive Assessment and Accountability Systems

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November 2001

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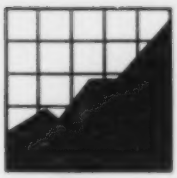

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Executive Summary

The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) has identified essential principles of inclusive assessment and accountability systems. These principles are based on a decade of NCEO's documentation of assessment and accountability systems and on review and comment from multiple stakeholders who share a common goal of improving outcomes for all students. This report presents six core principles of inclusive assessment and accountability systems with a brief rationale and specific characteristics that reflect each principle. While we address the principles here as they apply to students with disabilities, we suspect that with slight modification they apply also to students with limited English proficiency. The principles are:

Principle 1. All students with disabilities are included in the assessment system.

Principle 2. Decisions about how students with disabilities participate in the assessment system are the result of clearly articulated participation, accommodations, and alternate assessment decision-making processes.

Principle 3. All students with disabilities are included when student scores are publicly reported, in the same frequency and format as all other students, whether they participate with or without accommodations, or in an alternate assessment.

Principle 4. The assessment performance of students with disabilities has the same impact on the final accountability index as the performance of other students, regardless of how the students participate in the assessment system (i.e., with or without accommodations, or in an alternate assessment).

Principle 5. There is improvement of both the assessment system and the accountability system over time, through the processes of formal monitoring, ongoing evaluation, and systematic training in the context of emerging research and best practice.

Principle 6. Every policy and practice reflects the belief that ***all students*** must be included in state and district assessment and accountability systems.

A companion set of self-study checklists is also available and can be downloaded from the NCEO Web site. The checklists are based on the principles and characteristics, and focus specifically on three topics essential to inclusive systems – participation, accommodations, and alternate assessment.

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The Need for New Guidelines

All children can learn. That simple but remarkable statement represents a shift in thinking about schools and schooling in the United States. For the past decade, our nation's schools have refocused their efforts toward high standards for the learning of all children, supported by assessment and accountability systems that will ensure that the public knows about the progress of all students toward those standards.

At the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), we have been documenting the progress of policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders in defining a new paradigm of inclusive assessment and accountability systems. We have also been working closely with national, state, district, and school personnel to identify issues, challenges, and initial recommendations (Quenemoen, Lehr, Thurlow, & Massanari, 2001). These efforts have given us a broad perspective on what can be accomplished in moving toward a more comprehensive assessment and accountability system. We believe that it is time to revise early guidelines (Elliott, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 1996) that addressed maximizing the participation of students with disabilities in large-scale assessments.

The purpose of the principles and characteristics in this report is to clarify what we perceive to be the essential components of inclusive assessment and accountability systems. We hope that it will prompt discussion of the principles and characteristics. But, more than this, we hope it will prompt states and districts to revisit the basic assumptions underlying their assessment and accountability systems.

The principles and characteristics included here complement the notion of *universally designed assessments*, a term that refers to the development of assessments that are designed from the beginning to be accessible and valid for the widest range of students, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. Among the processes involved in developing universally designed assessments are: (1) test conceptualization, (2) test construction, (3) test tryouts, (4) item analyses, and (5) test revision. See the NCEO Web site (http://education.umn.edu/NCEO) for further information about this topic.

There has been remarkable progress during the past decade in moving toward more inclusive assessment systems. Starting from the point when the Education Summit of 1989 set an agenda for education reform that called for higher expectations, rigorous educational standards, and assessments of progress for all students (later reinforced by Goals 2000, ESEA Title I, and IDEA 97), the changes have been remarkable. In the early 1990s, most states included 10% or fewer of their students with disabilities in state assessments (Shriner & Thurlow, 1993). Participation and accommodation policies were either non-existent or limiting (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Silverstein, 1993). Only one state had developed an inclusive assessment system

in the early 1990s – with both a general and alternate assessment (National Governor's Association, 1993; Shriner, Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Honetschlager, 1994). Negative consequences of excluding students with disabilities became apparent: increased rates of referral to special education, exclusion from the curriculum, and no information on the educational results of students with disabilities (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, McGrew, & Shriner, 1994).

Participation rates in state assessments increased steadily during the 1990s; by 1998 most states had over 50% of students with disabilities in their assessments (Thompson & Thurlow, 1999). Participation and accommodation policies have been established in every state (Thurlow, House, Boys, Scott, & Ysseldyke, 2000). Access to the curriculum emerged as a critical part of improving the performance of disabilities on state assessments. All but a few states had developed alternate assessments by 2000 for those students unable to participate in the general state assessment even with accommodations (Thompson & Thurlow, 2001).

Positive consequences of including students with disabilities emerged and performance increased; expectations for students rose; access to the curriculum increased; teachers became more skilled at teaching students with disabilities (New York State Education Department, 2001; Quenemoen et al., 2001; Thompson & Thurlow, 2001). However, unintended negative consequences were identified as well.

We believe that it is possible to enhance the positive consequences and reduce the negative consequences by carefully examining the assumptions on which assessment and accountability systems are based, and by moving toward systems that are designed to be more inclusive of students with disabilities. Toward that end, we have developed the principles and characteristics of inclusive assessment and accountability systems presented in this report. We suspect that these principles, in slightly modified form, will apply also to students with limited English proficiency and any other group of students who has not reaped the benefits of the standards-based assessment and accountability systems that are being implemented.

We present six core principles of inclusive assessment and accountability systems with a brief statement of rationale for each principle. For each principle, we also present specific characteristics that reflect the principle – these provide more precise information about the principles. Each of the characteristics is supported by a rationale statement.

The six principles were developed to reflect best practice, not simply compliance with legal requirements. While the principles are consistent with the requirements of current Federal laws governing special education and Title I services (i.e., IDEA 1997; ESEA 1994), they go beyond the letter of the law to the point where research and practice suggest there will be important benefits to students and educators.

The principles are based on a decade of documentation of assessment and accountability systems. Most of the documentation work is in reports available on the NCEO Web site (http://education.umn.edu/NCEO). The principles are also based on review and comment from multiple stakeholders who share a common goal of improving outcomes for all students. This stakeholder group included district level practitioners; parent advocates; state department assessment, general education, and special education staff; state and federal policymakers; and regional and national technical assistance providers.

A companion set of self-study checklists is also available. The checklists are based on the principles and characteristics, and focus specifically on three topics essential to inclusive systems – participation, accommodations, and alternate assessment. The self-study checklists may be used in part or in whole, as needed, to help stakeholder groups apply the principles and characteristics to their current policies and practices, and to determine their strengths and prioritize areas for improvement. The *Self Study Guide to Inclusive Assessment and Accountability Systems* contains these checklists, and provides a workbook format to assist in the study of the implementation of inclusive assessment and accountability systems in state and district settings. The *Self Study Guide* can be obtained at no charge by downloading it from the NCEO Web site.

Overview of Principles

The six principles of inclusive assessment and accountability systems are listed here. On the pages to follow, the principles, a rationale for each one, and a set of characteristics, each with its own rationale are presented.

Principle 1. All students with disabilities are included in the assessment system.

Principle 2. Decisions about how students with disabilities participate in the assessment system are the result of clearly articulated participation, accommodations, and alternate assessment decision-making processes.

Principle 3. All students with disabilities are included when student scores are publicly reported, in the same frequency and format as all other students, whether they participate with or without accommodations, or in an alternate assessment.

Principle 4. The assessment performance of students with disabilities has the same impact on the final accountability index as the performance of other students, regardless of how the students participate in the assessment system (i.e., with or without accommodations, or in an alternate assessment).

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Principle 5. There is improvement of both the assessment system and the accountability system over time, through the processes of formal monitoring, ongoing evaluation, and systematic training in the context of emerging research and best practice.

Principle 6. Every policy and practice reflects the belief that ***all students*** must be included in state and district assessment and accountability systems.

Principles and Characteristics

In this section we provide the details of each principle—what each one means in terms of specific characteristics. Rationales are provided for each principle in general, and then for each of the specific characteristics.

Principle 1. All students with disabilities are included in the assessment system.

This principle indicates that all students are in the assessment system in some way—taking the assessment in the same way as all other students, or taking the same assessment with accommodations, or for a small percentage of students, participating in an alternate assessment. The progress of every student toward high standards will be evaluated (i.e., assessed) in some way. Three characteristics support Principle 1 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Principle 1 and Its Characteristics

Principle 1. All students with disabilities are included in the assessment system.
Characteristic 1.1. All students in all settings who receive educational services are included in the assessment system.
Characteristic 1.2. Alternative ways to participate in assessment—other than the same way as other students, with accommodations, or in an alternate assessment—are allowed only to the extent that they are allowed for other students, and only after they have been carefully reviewed by stakeholders and policymakers, and their use and impact has been carefully studied.
Characteristic 1.3. Exemptions or exclusions from assessment are allowed for students with disabilities only to the extent that they are allowed for other students.

Characteristic 1.1. *All students in all settings who receive educational services are included in the assessment system.*
The definition of "all" students includes all students who receive educational services in any setting. This includes students in traditional public school placements, and students who change schools or placements, as well as all students receiving federally funded educational services in non-traditional settings such as students in home schools, private schools, charter schools, state-operated programs, in the juvenile justice system, or any other setting where these educational services are provided.

Characteristic 1.2. *Alternative ways to participate in assessment—other than the same way as other students, with accommodations, or in an alternate assessment—are allowed only to the extent that they are allowed for other students, and only after they have been carefully reviewed by stakeholders and policymakers, and their use and impact has been carefully studied.*
Testing students out-of-level, having them take an off-the-shelf individualized assessment rather than the state or district assessment, or other variations of ways to participate in assessments should not be used for students with disabilities unless they are also used for other students. Even then, they should not be used without first being carefully reviewed and their implementation studied to ensure high expectations are not unintentionally lowered by this practice.

Characteristic 1.3. *Exemptions or exclusions from assessment are allowed for students with disabilities only to the extent that they are allowed for other students.*
Exemptions or exclusions are never allowed simply because a student has a disability. To the extent that a state or district has a policy that allows parents to request that students not participate in state or district testing for various reasons, the same policies apply to students with disabilities. When these kinds of options do exist, it is essential that the state or district keep track of the number of requests for exemption/exclusion from testing, by disability category and grade level to be sure that students with disabilities are not being exempted disproportionately.

Principle 2. Decisions about how students with disabilities participate in the assessment system are the result of clearly articulated participation, accommodations, and alternate assessment decision-making processes.

This principle focuses on the need for thoughtful student-by-student decisions about how each student can show what he or she knows and is able to do (while still holding high expectations), thus how each can best participate in the assessment system. The principle also focuses on the related need for participation decisions to be made by the IEP team with full knowledge of the implications of the decision. Five characteristics support Principle 2 (see Table 2).

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Table 2. Principle 2 and Its Characteristics

Principle 2. Decisions about how students with disabilities participate in the assessment system are the result of clearly articulated participation, accommodations, and alternate assessment decision-making processes.

Characteristic 2.1. Decisions about how students participate in the assessment system are based on the student's ability to show what she or he knows and is able to do in the assessment formats available to all students – not on the student's instructional program, current level of functioning, or expectations about how well a student will perform.

Characteristic 2.2. Accommodations are available to all students, and decisions about use are based on student need and use in instruction.

Characteristic 2.3. The IEP team makes assessment participation, accommodation, and alternate assessment decisions on an individual student basis for each state and district assessment.

Characteristic 2.4. The IEP team documents assessment participation, accommodation, and alternate assessment decisions and the rationale for them on the IEP, and reviews the decisions made for individual students and the rationale for these decisions at least annually.

Characteristic 2.5. There are clear and efficient procedures for collecting, compiling, and transferring assessment decision information from each student's IEP to state and district assessment planners and administrators.

Characteristic 2.1. *Decisions about how students participate in the assessment system are based on the student's ability to show what she or he knows and is able to do in the assessment formats available to all students – not on the student's instructional program, current level of functioning, or expectations about how well a student will perform.*

Historically, students with disabilities were excluded from assessments. As states and districts require that they participate in assessments, it is tempting to try to protect students, keep them in easy levels of assessment, or let low expectations guide decisions. This is inappropriate, and in many cases—or for some time—the tendency will have to be counteracted by having available a set of specific decision-making criteria to determine the ways in which individual students should participate in the assessment system. If the current assessment formats do not match the needs of all students, the formats need to be made more accessible for all students. Separate assessments for some students risk lowering expectations for those students.

Characteristic 2.2. *Accommodations are available to all students, and decisions about use are based on student need and use in instruction.*

All students have strengths and needs that result in different ways that they effectively access instruction and assessment. Ideally, need would be the major determinant of whether accommodations were used with any student (with or without identified disabilities), both for instruction and assessment. Reasonable decisions need to be made about certain accommodations that may be used for instruction that are not appropriate for assessments because they confound the construct being measured; it is also possible that some accommodations are appropriate for assessment but not for instruction.

Characteristic 2.3. *The IEP team makes assessment participation, accommodation, and alternate assessment decisions on an individual student basis for each state and district assessment.*
Decisions about participation in one particular state or district assessment may be different from decisions about participation for another assessment that has a different purpose or different format. For each assessment, the people who know each student best are in the best position to understand the issues that affect assessment for each student. These people often are members of the student's IEP team. Parents and the student, when appropriate, are essential members of the team. Additionally there may be other people not normally on the IEP team who have insight into the student's needs; those people also should be consulted about decisions as well. These people may include the student (if the student is not already participating on the team), paraprofessional, counselor, psychologist, caretaker, and others.

Characteristic 2.4. *The IEP team documents assessment participation, accommodation, and alternate assessment decisions and the rationale for them on the IEP, and reviews the decisions made for individual students and the rationale for these decisions at least annually.*
Participation decisions made by the IEP team, and the team's rationale for the decisions, are made year by year, or more frequently if needed. IEP documentation of these decisions provides an important record of the individual student's needs and strengths. The documentation also helps track the ability of the assessment system to meet all students' needs. These decisions need to be reviewed and changed as appropriate with the development of each annual IEP to reflect changing student needs and skills, and to reflect changes in the assessment system. Although IEPs often are developed all year on a schedule that may not coincide with planning for state and district assessments, it is important to make decisions at the IEP meeting that most closely precedes each assessment so that the decision will be most valid.

Characteristic 2.5. *There are clear and efficient procedures for collecting, compiling, and transferring assessment decision information from each student's IEP to state and district assessment planners and administrators.*
It is important to ensure timely and efficient transfer of information on assessment decisions to allow ordering and distribution of appropriate materials. For example, accommodations decisions requiring special formats or alternate assessment portfolio materials generally must be noted several weeks in advance of the assessment. In addition, since many states encourage the use of

a variety of performance-based assessment strategies for alternate assessments, getting timely materials and support to general and special education staff who manage alternate assessment data gathering will increase the quality of evidence included in alternate assessments.

Principle 3. All students with disabilities are included when student scores are publicly reported, in the same frequency and format as all other students, whether they participate with or without accommodations, or in an alternate assessment.

This principle provides the first level of accountability for the scores of students with disabilities. Regardless of how students participate in assessments, with or without accommodations, or in an alternate assessment, students' scores are reported, or if scores are not reported due to technical issues or absence, the students are still accounted for in the reporting system. Four characteristics support Principle 3 (see Table 3).

Table 3. Principle 3 and Its Characteristics

Principle 3. All students with disabilities are included when student scores are publicly reported, in the same frequency and format as all other students, whether they participate with or without accommodations, or in an alternate assessment.
Characteristic 3.1. All students in all placement settings who receive educational services are accounted for in the reporting system.
Characteristic 3.2. The number and percentage of students not in the assessment system in any way (with or without accommodations, or via an alternate assessment) are reported and an explanation given for their nonparticipation.
Characteristic 3.3. Scores that are not aggregated because of technical issues are still reported.
Characteristic 3.4. Reports are provided to educators, parents, students, policymakers, and journalists, with a clear explanation of results and implications.

Characteristic 3.1. *All students in all placement settings who receive educational services are accounted for in the reporting system.*

Every student must be counted and count. This includes students in traditional public school placements, but also includes the participation and performance of students who change schools or placements. All students receiving federally funded educational services in non-traditional settings should be included and reported as well, such as students in home schools, private schools, charter schools, state-operated programs, and in the juvenile justice system. The

challenge of counting every student, and ensuring that each student's progress counts, is fundamental to the success of standards-based reform. There is a national consensus that all students are to be held to high standards and all schools are to fully support all student's efforts to reach those standards, regardless of the setting. If some students are excluded or set aside in reporting, the public has no way of knowing how all students or all schools are doing.

Characteristic 3.2. *The number and percentage of students not in the assessment system in any way (with or without accommodations, or via an alternate assessment) are reported and an explanation given for their nonparticipation.*

At a minimum, every student who does not participate actively in the assessment system must be detectable when scores are reported. Typically, this is done by reporting the number of students not participating in the assessment system. Even if a state or district factors students who do not take the assessment into the reported scores (e.g., by giving them a score of zero), the number of students excluded should still be reported. In addition, the reasons for exclusion (e.g., parent request, absenteeism, noncompliance, invalid test protocol) should be reported by subpopulation.

Characteristic 3.3. *Scores that are not aggregated because of technical issues are still reported.*

Scores of students who take assessments with accommodations that are considered to reduce the validity of the score should still be reported, with an explanation of why they are separated from the scores of other students, if they are. Similarly, the performance of alternate assessment participants should be reported, with an explanation of why they are separated from the scores of other students, if they are.

Characteristic 3.4. *Reports are provided to educators, parents, students, policymakers, and journalists, with a clear explanation of results and implications.*

State and district staff members have a responsibility to ensure that data are used in ways that are consistent with the purpose of each assessment. Reports should be readily available and accessible, and should include cautions about misinterpretation of data. Data should be suppressed without deleting from the aggregate when any factors may compromise student privacy. Consideration should be given to having community information sessions or special outreach to the media to help people use the reports responsibly. Finally, for students in placements other than the "neighborhood" school, students should be included in reports that will most directly affect the student's education—where his or her performance counts, and where public reporting can make a difference. For example, if a student with disabilities is being served in a specialized setting outside of his or her home district (or school), the progress of that student should be reported in the context where accountability and concern for that student most directly lies.

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Principle 4. The assessment performance of students with disabilities has the same impact on the final accountability index as the performance of other students, regardless of how the students participate in the assessment system (i.e., with or without accommodations, or in an alternate assessment).

This principle provides the second level of accountability for students with disabilities. In order for all students to count in increased expectations for accountable schools, all student assessment participation and performance data must be integrated into district and state accountability indices. Federal Title I requirements specifically require this, but districts and states should address fully inclusive accountability in any local or state developed accountability indices to promote equal access and opportunity for all students. Three characteristics support Principle 4 (see Table 4).

Table 4. Principle 4 and Its Characteristics

Principle 4. The assessment performance of students with disabilities has the same impact on the final accountability index as the performance of other students, regardless of how the students participate in the assessment system (i.e., with or without accommodations, or in an alternate assessment).
Characteristic 4.1. Performance data for all students regardless of how they participate, have the same impact as all other student performance data in accountability indices.
Characteristic 4.2. There are incentives for including all students in the accountability system, such as including participation rates or increase in participation rates in the accountability index.
Characteristic 4.3. There are phase-in and appeals processes for student accountability for students who have not had access to the general curriculum; but systems are held accountable immediately.

Characteristic 4.1. *Performance data for all students regardless of how they participate, have the same impact as all other student performance data in accountability indices.*

Merging all student performance data into accountability indices is technically challenging at this time, but essential to an inclusive system. It may require use of techniques such as multiple measures or a panel review of student evidence of learning to determine appropriate scores for students who use accommodations that may reduce the validity of the scores. This required extra step should result in states and districts putting pressure on test developers to develop more universally-designed assessments, thus reducing the dilemma in the future. The process to integrate alternate assessment scores will put pressure on the integrity of the purpose and design of the alternate assessment as well.

Characteristic 4.2. *There are incentives for including all students in the accountability system, such as including participation rates or increase in participation rates in the accountability index.*

Comparing composite scores for two schools when one school includes 100% of students in accountability indices, and another school includes 80% of its students (most likely excluding students who are expected to perform poorly) would be unfair and would have the unintended consequence of promoting a decrease in participation rates. In the short term, accountability indices can adjust for these varying inclusion rates by rewarding schools where the inclusion rate is already high or is increasing at desired rates until full inclusion is in place.

Characteristic 4.3. *There are phase-in and appeals processes for student accountability for students who have not had access to the general curriculum; but systems are held accountable immediately.*

There are students who have "lost" years of access to the general curriculum, and are now being held accountable for content they have not had an opportunity to learn. A phase-in of student accountability should be accompanied by interventions and support services. However, it is important to hold schools accountable immediately as an incentive for rapid change, or students will continue to lose opportunities. Since all schools have the same opportunities to provide student access to instruction toward high standards, this affects all schools equally, as long as all students are being assessed in some way in all schools.

Principle 5. There is improvement of both the assessment system and the accountability system over time, through the processes of formal monitoring, ongoing evaluation, and systematic training in the context of emerging research and best practice.

This principle addresses the need to base inclusive assessment and accountability practices on current and emerging research and best practice, with continuous improvement of practices as research-based understanding evolves. By working together on improvement of assessment and accountability systems, stakeholders can sustain commitment to keeping the standards high and keeping the focus clear on all students being successful. Ongoing training of IEP team members and other key partners is an essential component of this effort. Four characteristics support Principle 5 (see Table 5).

Characteristic 5.1. *All decisions about student participation, accommodations, and alternate assessment are collected, compiled, and reported, and the data are used to improve the quality of the assessment process at the school, district, and state levels.*

Identifying methods to use at the school level to check on appropriateness of the decisions, and providing feedback to IEP teams on appropriateness, will improve the quality of assessment data in the long term. Likewise, if good participation, accommodation, and alternate assessment

Table 5. Principle 5 and Its Characteristics

Principle 5. There is improvement of both the assessment system and the accountability system over time, through the processes of formal monitoring, ongoing evaluation, and systematic training in the context of emerging research and best practice.
Characteristic 5.1. All decisions about student participation, accommodations, and alternate assessment are collected, compiled, and reported, and the data are used to improve the quality of the assessment process at the school, district, and state levels.
Characteristic 5.2 The consequences of student assessment decisions are identified, compiled, and reported, and the data are reviewed by multiple stakeholders and are used to improve the quality of the accountability processes at the school, district, and state levels.
Characteristic 5.3. Based on the results of the monitoring and evaluation of the assessment and accountability systems, training is provided to multiple audiences to increase the understanding of the purpose, options, procedures, and implications of assessment options, including consequences for promotion and graduation.
Characteristic 5.4. Appropriate training for IEP teams and other key personnel is provided through collaboration of state, district, higher education (both preservice and inservice), and advocacy organizations.

decisions are made at the IEP team level, but the information is poorly documented, not communicated to instructional settings or to the assessment personnel, the validity of the assessment results will be reduced. By monitoring these decisions, and ensuring the decisions are reflected in practice, schools, districts, and states can ensure the best possible measurement of actual student progress toward standards.

Characteristic 5.2 *The consequences of student assessment decisions are identified, compiled, and reported, and the data are reviewed by multiple stakeholders and are used to improve the quality of the accountability processes at the school, district, and state levels.*
Typically the consequences of assessment and accountability processes are more difficult to define and capture. In developing systems, the view of consequences often depends on the perspective of the viewer. For that reason, the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of consequences may require stakeholder involvement to determine what consequences are intended and positive, and which are unintended and negative. That also builds support for changes in the systems as they are needed.

Characteristic 5.3. *Based on the results of the monitoring and evaluation of the assessment and accountability systems, training is provided to multiple audiences to increase the*

understanding of the purpose, options, procedures, and implications of assessment options, including consequences for promotion and graduation.

Increasing the assessment literacy of IEP team members will improve the quality of the assessment decisions made by each team. That in turn will improve how well assessments measure progress toward standards for all students, regardless of how they participate (with or without accommodations, or in an alternate assessment). Since many of these decisions have consequences for the student, training is essential for effective inclusion of all students.

Characteristic 5.4. *Appropriate training for IEP teams and other key personnel is provided through collaboration of state, district, higher education (both preservice and inservice), and advocacy organizations.*

All IEP teams and other key personnel need to have access to ongoing training and technical assistance. State departments of education can make connections, provide leadership and incentives, develop written materials, and present introductory workshops, but day-to-day support needs to be built into a district's comprehensive system of professional development. In addition, states can partner with institutions of higher learning to rethink basic teacher competency and licensure requirements in light of the new emphasis on measuring the progress of all students toward high standards. Also, parent training organizations and other advocacy groups can be essential training partners to reach parents and the students themselves.

Principle 6. Every policy and practice reflects the belief that ***all students*** must be included in state and district assessment and accountability systems.

This principle addresses the core belief system that underlies inclusive assessment and accountability systems. With this belief system in place, every question that arises or decision to be made goes back to "what does it mean for how each and every student counts in our system?" and "what are the possible consequences for each and every student in our system?" Each and every student includes those students who have disabilities of all types and students who are limited in their English proficiency, as well as other students such as those who are highly mobile, disadvantaged, or of minority status. Three characteristics support Principle 6 (see Table 6).

Characteristic 6.1. *There is broad support in the governor's office, at the state legislature and state agencies, and among professional groups for inclusion of all students in state school reform efforts linked to assessments and accountability, demonstrated by sufficient funding and resources (e.g., staff development) designed to ensure the capacity in every school for every student to succeed.*

All students can be successful if there is a political and economic commitment to build the capacity for success in each school and each classroom in the state. States that are demonstrating

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Table 6. Principle 6 and Its Characteristics

Principle 6. Every policy and practice reflects the belief that ***all students*** must be included in state and district assessment and accountability systems
Characteristic 6.1. There is broad support in the governor's office, at the state legislature and state agencies, and among professional groups for inclusion of all students in state school reform efforts linked to assessments and accountability, demonstrated by sufficient funding and resources (e.g., staff development) designed to ensure the capacity in every school for every student to succeed.
Characteristic 6.2. All students are included in every aspect of assessment and accountability systems, including the assessments, the reporting of data, the determination of accountability measures, and the use of data for school improvement.
Characteristic 6.3. All aspects of assessment and accountability systems are designed and reviewed collaboratively, with input from other stakeholders (e.g., parents, advocacy groups, related service providers, community members), as well as general education, special education, curriculum, assessment, and administrative personnel.

best practices throughout their reform system have unified and committed understanding and leadership at all levels. If that commitment is not present, stakeholders work to achieve it.

Characteristic 6.2. *All students are included in every aspect of assessment and accountability systems, including the assessments, the reporting of data, the determination of accountability measures, and the use of data for school improvement.*
There is no aspect of the assessment system or the accountability system that excludes a subset of students, be they students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, migrant students, or highly mobile students. Every student is represented in one way or another in the assessment system, the reporting system, and the accountability system.

This characteristic reinforces the need to provide concrete methods of linking performance data reports for all students to the school improvement process, as well as to the accountability processes defined at the state and district levels. The state and district should provide tools to allow school improvement teams to disaggregate performance data to answer specific questions about performance of subpopulations, including students with disabilities. In addition, state and district supports to schools considered "in need of improvement" should include specific strategies designed to increase the performance of students with disabilities as well as other special populations. Inclusive systems assure that all students are included in the benefits of such supports.

Characteristic 6.3. *All aspects of assessment and accountability systems are designed and reviewed collaboratively, with input from other stakeholders (e.g., parents, advocacy groups, related service providers, community members), as well as general education, special education, curriculum, assessment, and administrative personnel.*

Inclusive assessment and accountability systems start before the development of the instruments and the identification of consequences. Indeed, the very identification of standards and how they will be measured is part of the picture of fully inclusive systems. From the development of standards, through systematic alignment of the curriculum to the standards, and instruction to both of these, as well as alignment of assessment to desired results, stakeholder groups need to review all aspects of development for inclusiveness and accessibility. That way, through inclusive assessments that measure the progress of all students toward standards, and inclusive accountability measures that require systematic improvement of standards-based instruction, all aspects of the educational system are aligned for every student.

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